

**March 12, 2015**

**Testimony for the Human Services Committee**

**Public Hearing**

**Connecticut General Assembly**

**Good Afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and the esteemed members of the Human Services Committee.**

**I am here today in support of SB1044, an Act Concerning the Recoupment of State Costs Attributable to Low Wage Employers that would help increase wages for teachers in the child care profession.**

**I have been working in the field of Early Childhood Education in Connecticut as a teacher and now Director for the past 19 years. I choose to continue to teach every week in classrooms because that is my passion. Prior to that I was working in Albany, NY in a school as I obtained my MS in Early Childhood Education. My degree is from a very highly renowned school of Early Childhood and Elementary Education, in neighboring New York State. It is regionally accredited. I have worked at a state college in CT teaching teachers through their early childhood degree program. My first preschool classrooms of students from CT are themselves graduating from college now and starting their careers. They are excellent examples of the product of good quality families and education from birth through college.**

**It is amazing to me that after 20 years in this field, someone who has a Masters Degree would still only make \$16-\$18 per hour as a teacher in an early childhood classroom. That is \$37,000 a year, after 20 years of service. Bachelor and Associates, more like \$12-\$15 per hour. It is less than people make to care for animals, work at restaurants, and do other entry-level work in our state and yet we are asked to care for and educate the most important people in the state: Our children. We are being asked to help close the achievement gap. Yet most of us can't even figure out how to pay the next oil or food bill for our families on what we make.**

I grew up on a small, rural family farm in northern New York. My family had no money, no health insurance, very little in the way of personal possessions. Each of the 5 of the children in my family excelled in school and put ourselves through college. We are proud to say we have moved up in economic status as compared to our parents, as most parents hope their children will. However, the stark reality for me, with my Masters Degree in ECE is that if I had not gotten married, I would be on state assistance right now. In the same drastic economic peril I was in as a child. I have not personally bettered my situation even though I have a graduate degree because the teaching field I work in pays too little for anyone to live on as a family. If it were not for my husband working as an Engineer, we would be low income, not middle income. I don't have health or dental insurance through my work, but my husbands. I don't make enough money to afford our weekly food bill, our child care costs or even our mortgage. I make enough money to pay for gas and heat for our home, and my husband pays everything else. Every other single bill. This is not right. I have worked diligently for just about 20 straight years and though you would think I would be making enough money to afford basic needs, I am not.

Please pass legislation to start paying Early Childhood Educators a living wage! The money that the state will save on the expenses side (WIC, Heating Assistance, HUSKY, Food Stamps, etc) will far outweigh the expense created to raise all our early childhood educators in private and public programs to a commensurate salary to our public school counterparts. Please help us to make this happen this year. The system cannot continue to go on in this manner. Something is going to have to give.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Corrice

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